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U.S. May Give CIA 'Free Hand,' Soviets Say

MOSCOW (AP) — A proposed expansion of CIA domestic activities would give it "a free hand," Tass said yesterday, charging that current restrictions on the intelligence agency's operations in the United States are "formal and cosmetic in their nature."

The official Soviet agency also accused the CIA of involvement in the 1976 slaying of former Chilean cabinet minister Orlando Letelier in Washington.

Changes in laws governing the CIA were proposed as part of an effort to control terrorism and would allow the agency to conduct break-ins, physical surveillance and covert infiltration of American groups, according to Washington sources. Such activities were barred after scandals over CIA spying on anti-war groups during the 1960s.

Those restrictions were formal and cosmetic in their nature," Tass said, "and the CIA did not stop its terroristic activities... evidenced, in particular, by the murder in Washington in September 1976 of Orlando Letelier, former foreign minister in the Popular Unity government in Chile."

"The CIA was directly involved in that assassination," Tass said. Moscow has accused the CIA of plotting the 1973 coup against the Chilean government in which Marxist President Salvador Allende died. This is believed to be the first time the Soviet media have linked the CIA with Letelier's death.